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LIFE SCIENCES

YOSEMITE

VOLUME XXXIX - NUMBER 10

OCTOBER 1960





IN COOPERATION WITH THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE.

To make his life on earth more worthwhile, the individual needs to be on good terms not only with his human neighbors, his automobile, radio and good books, but also with the natural environment about him, the earth which nurtures him and the plants and animals which share it with him. If education is to contribute to this better life, it must come as well from deeper understanding and appreciation of the beauties and processes in living nature as from study of the humanities and the arts.

—G. B. Gunlogson

Y o s e m i t e

NATURE NOTES

Since 1922, the monthly publication of the National Park Service and the Yosemite Natural History Association in Yosemite National Park.

John C. Preston, Park Superintendent

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Paul F. McCrary, Assistant Park Naturalist

Keith A. Trexler, Junior Park Naturalist

VOLUME XXXIX

OCTOBER 1960

NO. 10

JUNIOR RANGERS — A REPORT

Lloyd W. Brubaker, Ranger-Naturalist

Forty years ago the foundations were laid for the present naturalist division of the National Park Service. (See *Yosemite Nature Notes*, July, 1960) The early "Nature Guides" recognized a need for training children in the use and enjoyment of National Parks - thus a new program was born.

The Yosemite Junior Nature School, organized in June 1930 under the leadership of Park Naturalist C. A. Harwell, superseded the children's nature walks of previous summers. Lasting through 1954, the school had six week long sessions each summer, with a different subject each day. Trees, birds, mammals, flowers and geology were covered. A classroom was made available in the museum and short hikes were taken to give practice in observation and interpretation. Two ranger-naturalists were in charge, assisted by several ladies resident in the Valley.

In 1934 the 379 children in atten-

dance were given a test card which described definite goals designed to fulfill the school's objectives. When the test card was completed an award card was given as recognition. A group of advanced children headed by capable leaders spent considerable time in setting up what was hoped to someday become a junior museum. Interesting exhibits covering several phases of natural history were set up.

By 1937, guided by Ranger-Naturalist Walter Heil, two issues of a *Junior Nature Notes Magazine* were published containing nature stories written by the children. A total of 410 children attended the program that year. World War II curtailed the program which was revived in 1949 by Associate Park Naturalist Harry C. Parker.

The present Junior Ranger program, begun in 1955, was authored by Naturalists D. E. McHenry and W. W. Bryant. At the outset this pro-

gram was for youngsters from seven to fifteen years of age. In more recent years it has had to be restricted to children eight to 13 due to ever increasing attendance.

Junior Rangers is now a week long course with a different subject covered each morning. Trees, birds, mammals, and reptiles are discussed with the last morning reserved for a hike during which the subject matter of previous sessions is brought together as ecology. The program stresses activity. Hikes, exploration, and observation are the keynotes. Lecturing is kept at a minimum, but discussion is encouraged. Pure identification of plants and animals is played down in favor of stressing relationships between plants, animals, soil, and water. Names of Yosemite's plants and animals would be of little use, at home, to youngsters from all over the United States. The principles

of ecology, however, apply everywhere.

An area behind the new and popular Happy Isles Nature Center has been set aside for the Junior Ranger program. Here, outdoor work tables and storage areas facilitate instruction. Space is adequate for seventy to eighty children though class attendance has sometimes exceeded 120. Four ranger-naturalists and an enrollment assistant conduct the two and-a-half hour sessions. With increasing demands an afternoon and two evening programs have been scheduled. Prior to this year an afternoon craft class was held once each week. This year the craft class was replaced by a session on fire search, and rescue each Wednesday from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. Taught with the assistance of Park Rangers, instruction is given in trail safety, fire prevention, and rescue operations to

Yosemite's first junior nature school-July, 1930. Mrs. J. W. Emmert, students and "model"

—Harwell, NP





Bringing the "victim" down. Search and rescue session for 1960 Junior Rangers.

—Hubbard, NPS

large groups of children and their parents. Evening campfires, Tuesdays and Thursdays, feature Indian lore and geology.

Awards, in the form of badges and patches, are given to participants attending a specified number of classes. Concern over the awards becoming ends in themselves has been expressed. Evaluation of graduates has proven this to be untrue — the majority of the children attending have shown a distinct desire to learn plus a surprising level of competency in subjects covered.

This year the program was strengthened to appeal more to twelve and thirteen year olds. (The number in each age group varies considerably from week to week, but the oldest group is consistently the smallest.) A special Friday morning hike of five miles was scheduled and a donkey was rented to carry equipment and add excitement. Along the trail attention was paid to the lessons of the week and also to problems of donkey management. The hike ended at the stables at 2:30 p.m. An increase in the numbers of twelve and thirteen year olds was immediately experienced.

Yosemite's Junior Ranger program

is, no doubt, here to stay. In the eight weeks of morning sessions in 1960 more than 1,000 children enrolled in the program. Public reaction has been favorable and rangers and naturalists have enjoyed the experience of working with children in the out-of-doors. Learning situations have been ideal! Into what other classroom will a bear walk and add his bit to the lesson? From what student desk may a belted kingfisher be watched putting on an exhibition of fishing skill that yields a fish with every "cast"? Only in the Junior Ranger "school"!

Training offered by the Junior Ranger type program is needed to help our next generation more fully appreciate and more competently use our national parks. In the age of Sputnik this is one of the rare cases where education is aimed solely toward pursuits of peace without cold war overtones. A national park is a delicate jewel surrounded by a mounting of high speed living. Natural features found in national parks suffer greatly at the hands of ignorant citizens. Picked flowers, carved trees, trampled meadows, and animals fed with strange and detrimental foods move our parks closer

to complete loss. Through the training of our young people these treasures will be securely protected.

In 1934 Ranger-Naturalist Reynold E. Carlson said in *Yosemite Nature Notes*, "The next generation of adults, who will doubtless have more leisure time than the present generation, will find increasingly in our national parks and in all of nature a worthy use of that leisure. While the next

generation is still in its childhood is the time for instilling those lessons in conservation and appreciation of the out-of-doors which are so much more easily impressed upon children than upon adults. It was with this purpose in mind that the Yosemite Junior Nature School was organized." This is also true of the present Junior Ranger Program.

JUNIOR RANGERS AT HAPPY ISLES

Lorraine Miles, Ranger-Naturalist

The blue sky foretold fair weather, the faint breeze only suggested a jacket; boots, sandals, oxfords, and loafers - small size - scuffed at the needle-laden dust and bits of granite. From a chaos of footprints to orderly imprints took about 20 minutes, and away we went. The rye bowed only slightly as we passed; the wooly mint stem gave forth its secret beneath the fuzz as small hands discovered its shape. The black bear's log gave evidence of food haunts to new eyes. Even the ears so accustomed to horn, sirens, brakes, and doorbells took in the call of the red-shafted flicker; a soft whisper drew attention to his flight and destination. California ground squirrel eyed the procession with curiosity. Brown creeper stopped his progress up the trunk of a black oak just long enough to watch the aggressive oxfords balance on the log over the creek and make it to the other side; just long enough to wonder at the unsteady hesitation as sandals tried the log for the first time.

Sense of sure ground beneath the soles gave reassurance in the dense wood. Wide eyes looked for the newness, and bold strides covered the

heart that beat fast with expectation. Up the bear trail, the sandals and loafers found rocks which were not steps and eyes watched and ears listened.

Brown blutchers, size 8½, stopped, ears strained and were rewarded. Steller jay scolded an intruder. Chickaree bounded to the limb of an incense cedar. Crashing of limbs, violent rustling of leaves, quick swishing of ferns heralded an approach. Rolling and nipping, tripping and growling, two young cubs gamboled into sight. Each pair of boots, each pair of sandals strained to the toes, supported eager hearts and eyes, and minds as their wish came true. No garbage can here — no bag of goodies to tempt the cubs' onward move. Each head followed the course of the chase up the ponderosa pine until the leader was pulled to earth by his playmate and both tore through the fern, the rye, past the log and the wooly mint, out of sight to lie peacefully for a moment, or to seek their mother's milk.

A reward in the quest to understand Nature's ways — Junior Rangers discovered some of Yosemite's secrets.

JUNIOR RANGERS AT WHITE WOLF

David Essel, Ranger-Naturalist

It all started because we canceled the hike. Not much sense in taking a 12 mile naturalist conducted hike with only three people. What to do all day long? — We've plenty of campfire wood chopped — next weeks' program has been planned and July's report is done — what to do?!

Well, this brand new Mission 66 campground at White Wolf had had a summer and a half's use and some thoughtless campers had not been too careful with their trash. How about getting some of the youngsters out to help clean it up? — That's it! —we'll schedule an Anti-liter Bug Hike!

Word is passed around the camp — 1 p.m. — for any youngster that wants to help. Seventeen show up and we go through less than half the camp and Ranger Dave's Model A pickup is filled with rusty cans, paper and aluminum foil. A hot, dirty job.

"Gee, look, an ole car battery!" "Look at all this broken glass, that's dangerous!" "Look, I found part of an old sink!" "Oooh, someone left a disposable diaper on that rock." "Let me take care of that," says Ranger Dave — who gingerly eliminates the eyesore.

Afterwards? Well, we're hot, thirsty, and dirty—so a ride on the Model A to the store for a quick wash up, a welcome cool rootbeer and the awarding of a well earned Smokey the Bear badge.

It was fun — but more too — it was a valuable training session for a fine group of boys and girls. Training that they will pass on to their own chil-

dren, — and to their parents too! Woe be to the father that thoughtlessly tosses a bit of trash out the car window!

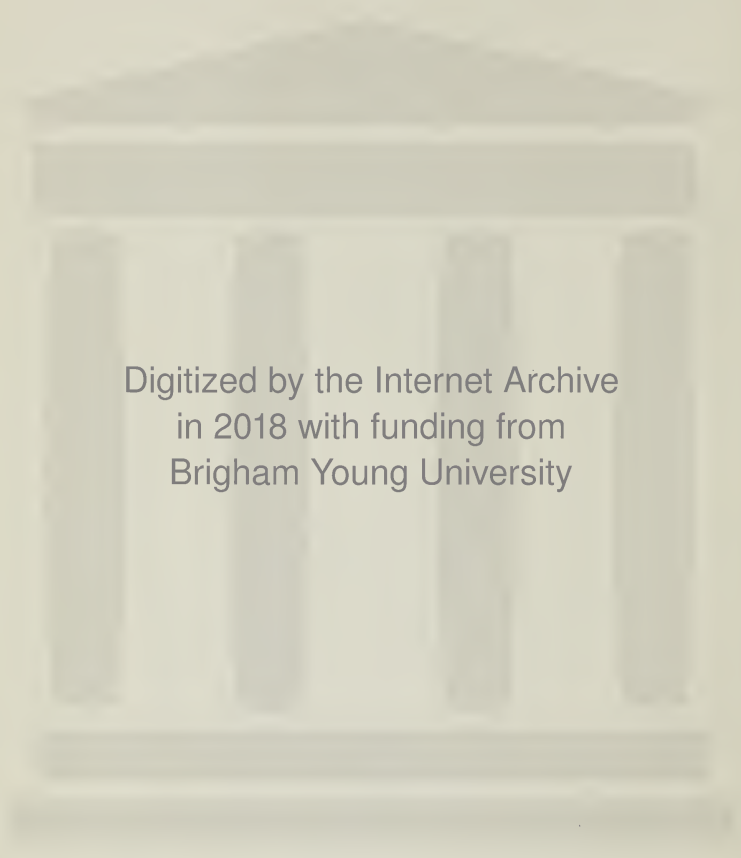
Perhaps we can schedule another cleanup hike and finish the rest of the campground. Say — maybe we could even work in a Junior Ranger Program similar to the one offered in Yosemite Valley. Well, we tried it — and it worked out wonderfully! On the first nature hike we naturally saw many rocks, leading to a discussion on how Yosemite Valley was formed. Saw a cirque, the cradle of glaciers, and talked about how glaciers worked away at the Valley walls.

Next day a different tramping hike through meadows filled with "corn lilies", inspecting decayed logs in search of the lowly fungus. We

"What does this bird eat, Ranger Dave?"

—Bullard, NPS



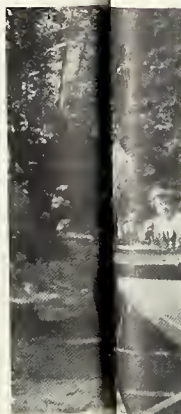


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*Junior
Rangers*



*Its Fun
To Be One*



puffed up a rocky ledge to an ancient knurled juniper loaded with stag-horn lichen — and talked about algae. Descending our lofty hill we walked through deep forest with tall red fir and Jeffrey pine. Oh it is good to be a part of the forest and to feel the coolness of the shade! "Do you know where you're going, Ranger Dave?" "What would you do if you got lost in the woods?" "What kind of pine cone is this big one here?" "Look, there's some rose quartz!" A wonderfully thrilling hike!

That afternoon we gathered at the campfire circle and went over the museum study skins brought up from the Valley. The cony, flying squirrel, pine marten, bat — and many more.

"Look at the teeth in that skull. What do you think this animal eats?" "He must eat meat. Look at the "canine teeth!" "How big is a bear when it is just born?" "Really? — only six ounces?" And on and on — The girls giggle and some shy away from the raccoon skull — but it's a wonderful session. Then wash up, light the fire and roast fat marshmallows while we take our "exams" on rocks, plants, and animals.

Next day another cleanup hike — this time we finish the campground — it looks pretty clean! The youngsters are looking forward to next year and another "Junior Ranger" program. "Will there be one?" — "You bet there will!"

"It's NOT slimy. It's just like mommie's purse!

—Hubbard, NPS



YOSEMITES BACK COUNTRY

Larry Bentschler, Junior-Ranger*

Thursday July 21, 1960, 5:30 A.M.
Leaving Happy Isles Yosemite National Park Calif.

After mush huffing and puffing the top of Nevada falls was reached, and there lay before my father and I and two heavy packs on our backs, supplies for 6 days, an open door to the great high country of the Sierras.

The first valley we came to was Little Yosemite. The elevation was 6,100, which meant the mescitoes were vary bad. Hikking threw Little Yosemite was much easier than the hike up to Nevada falls because it was a flat walk.

The twin briges were so much alike I couldn't tell them apart. The first one we came to had'nt any water coming under it, but the second one had lots of water coming under it. We stopped for a drink and both of us complained we were getting hungry, so we decided that we would go up the trail a little ways to the next camp.

We ate lunch and headed out for Merced Lake.

When we reached Merced Lake we met a troop of Boy Scouts that told us where the camp was. So we hiked on around the lake and found a nice camp. I wanted to stay but my father insisted that we move on and find a better one. We found a better one and decided we would stay here. When we set up camp I thought I would do some fishing, and didn't have any luck so I decided to come back because it was threatening rain.

Then we ate supper. When I was

threw my father told me to get some fire wood. Later I spotted quite a bit across the river. I made it across alright, but when I came back, the branch I was depending upon broke, and half of my leg got wet. Anyway I came back and got dry. It was getting darker so I decided to go fishing again. Then I said my father could go fishing up stream. I caught one, and on the cast, I thought I would jump out to a log and did'nt make it. This time I got wet waist high. Then my father came back with 3 fish so we could have enough for breakfast. We were tired so we went to bed. It sprinkled in the night but not enough to matter. The next morning we ate and packed our packs. Then we went over to the high Serria camp and got some extra food. We headed for the ranger station but the ranger was'nt there so we went on to Washburn Lake.

When we reached the lake we met some people that was camping at the first camp we came to. They told us where a very nice camp was so we looked it over and thought we would stay there. In the meantime another backpacker found the camp while we went back to get our gear. We met each other and decided that we would stay together for 3 days. We camped by the inlet for the lake so we could have fresh water whenever we wanted it and could keep things cold.

Every day we would catch our limets in eastern brook trout. Sometimes we would catch a cross-breed of Rainbow and Eastern Brook. I was

(Larry's paper is presented in its original form - we thought it would be more enjoyable that way. — Editor)

very lucky to see a limet of goldens. The man who caught them went a couple of miles up Adair Creek. There was only one fish I didn't see and that was a Brown. Altho I met a man who caught a 15 in. Brown out of Merced Lake.

The way you can tell an eastern brook is his large mouth, red spots on his sides, and reddish-orange fins margined in white.

The Golden has golden-yellow sides, scattered dark spots on top, and the tip of his fins are white.

The Rainbow has a small mouth, silvery sides and tiny scales, also the top of his body is dark green.

The Brown has a dark neck with dark spots, larger toward the back, and underneath is brownish-yellow.

We found quite a few flowers. In the wet areas we found the —

1. Sierra Rain Orchis —
Orchis Family
2. Tiger Lily — Lily Family
3. Columbine — Buttercup Family
4. Larkspur — Buttercup Family
5. Wild Onion — Lily Family
6. Monkey Flower —
Figwort Family

In the dry areas we found —

1. Pine drops — Heath Family
2. Yarrow — Buckwheat Family
3. Wyethia — Sunflower Family
4. Sierra Mariposa Lily —
Lily Family

5. Indian Paint Brush —

Castilleja Family

These are only a few of the flowers we saw.

One fascinating tree was the Jeffrey pine. It was a vanilla or cherry smell to it especially, when the sun has been hitting on it.

The wild life we saw was a yearling fawn, a doe, a garter snake and a porcupine.

This time coming down the sunrise trail took us to half dome because we had planned climb it on our way back to the valley. When we came to the junction we ditched our packs and started up. It was about 3:30 when we started up and about 6:00 when we got down. We were going to take our packs and camp down at Nevada Falls because our friend left his pack there while he slept on half dome.

We reached Nevada Falls at 9:00 P.M. We were coming in by flashlight. When we got there we couldn't find his camp so my father scouted around a little bit and found his camp, but we soon found out that a bear was not more than 20 ft. away from us. He had torn our friends' pack all apart. He woke my father and I up 5 times in the night. When our friend came down from half dome the next morning we told him the story and started our hike down to the valley 3 miles away.

Note: For the story of Tuolumne Meadows Junior Ranger program see "Childrens Day," *Yosemite Nature Notes*, 38(9):118-122, Sept. 1959.

THROUGH THE OPEN TENT FLAP

Woodrow W. Smith, Ranger-Naturalist

Perhaps the most common frustration faced by the short term visitor to Yosemite is his inability to deliver on demand to his children the promised sight of a "Smokey" bear or "Bambi" deer. The chances for the one day visitor seeing a bear in its natural habitat (not the refuse dump!) are probably those of hitting a jackpot with one nickel in a slot machine. The chances for seeing the deer are much better; young bucks in velvet establish themselves as mendicants of the valley meadows to the delight of thousands - and their own deterioration.

Of course, jays, robins, chipmunks, ground squirrels and gray tree squirrels provide plenty of interesting antics as they manage to adjust themselves well to the seasonal intrusions of multitudes, taking the largesse of food scraps in campground and lodge outdoor dining areas.

The visitor who can stay several days is certainly more likely to observe details and be present when the intermittent displays and wildlife demonstrations occur that don't follow a daily schedule. The visitor who keeps his eyes open and his tent flaps up has more odds in his favor that he will gain access to sights heretofore viewed as color plates and photos in issues of nature notes or projected on screens at ranger-naturalist campground programs. Those of us who stay for the summer have greater advantages as the time factor is in our favor still more.

Camp 19, the employees' tent area occupied by the seasonal ranger-naturalists and their families, is one of the most likely areas for opportunity to observe native wildlife. This is because (1) the camp is situated some distance from the crowded camp areas, (2) traffic along the south valley road has declined appreciably since the removal of the old village store and Degnan's restaurant to the present site across the river near the Park headquarters, museum, and post office, and (3) the backyard of Camp 19 is a haven for wildlife in the form of a large talus slope surrounded by many varieties of broad-leaf trees, conifers, shrubs, ravines and springs seeping from the cliff high above the shadowed glade.

A warm, dry summer benefits the would-be observer inadvertently; it is natural to raise the sides and back of the tent canvas to let in the afternoon breeze. Without the prevalence of insect life during the dry season, it is possible to live quite comfortably with flaps up — an open invitation, of course, to bold visitors like the ring-tailed cat. Whether late evening moonlight or at early dawn awakening, the lie-a-bed observer has a fine opportunity to use eyes and ears to advantage.

For this observer the Camp 19 wildlife paraded by unfailingly — begun and continued at intervals throughout the summer by visits of a curious prowler with a raccoon tail, the popular ring-tail reputed to be quite the miners' pet in gold rush

days. On one occasion, after upsetting jam jars in a neighboring tent, the fellow had the audacity to take a nap on this observer's spare bed, leaving several scats as calling cards — and possible symbols of his disdain for his proximity to the sleeping and therefore most unobservant occupant of the tent. Of course, one shouldn't complain if he has invited such intrusions by an "open tent flap" policy.

It is good to have a flashlight handy for those moments of quick awakening when one is startled into an awareness of a presence close by. Neighborly visits by the raccoon family were enjoyed for several nights until the subconscious mind of the observer refused to be on guard, and it is only a guess that the rustle of the oak leaves, a bit of scratching on the log, and a low growl of a young one were commonplace in the early hours of the morning. The first and second introductions to the raccoon seemed to embarrass him, then arose his curiosity. I saw him perching on a large boulder, and as my flashlight beam caught him unawares, he shyly ducked his masked face and, peering sideways, cautiously and quietly backed down and out of sight. A few nights later he satisfied his curiosity apparently by standing up on his hind legs and staring into the tent at me as I awakened and saw him in the moonlight. On another occasion a smaller associate which I took to be a younger member of the family started to climb up the trunk of a nearby fir when I flashed my light. The larger raccoon curled his lips, muttered a low growl, clicked his teeth and then barked out a higher and sharper command that seemed to say, "Get down, Junior!" The smaller raccoon complied immedi-

ately, and they quickly disappeared through the azaleas.

It's a memorable experience to awaken at five in the morning in time to see the jello quivery backside of a glossy black bear passing within arm's reach as the big fellow takes his morning constitutional along the regular route to the garbage can. The route seemed to continue across the road to the river, and after the bath while fording the stream, into Camp 6 or up to Housekeeping Camp 16. On the first occasion of my noticing this close passage by my bed, the temptation was strong to reach out and slap his rump. Discretion held me back, but I did call out, "Hey, where you going?" in sotto voice to keep from awaking the sleepers in tents around me. The bear had evidently not noticed me, for his response was such a startled leap over the big boulder and through the azaleas that he seemed to land in two bounds twenty feet away where he collected himself, pausing to look around and cough in my direction. He detoured back to his established path and paid no attention to me on succeeding morning occasions when I either saw him or heard him pass — using the detour route.

Early in July there were several mornings when the short chirp that sounded more like the single bark of a small dog aroused conjecture as to what type of animal was calling somewhere up the slope — in talus or tree. It could be the characteristic cry of the spotted owl said some of us; others thought it sounded more like the bark of a fox. Owls were heard a number of times, the pygmy's single hoot on a high pitch and the horned owl's intoning in deeper register the easily recognizable WHOO TOO-WHO WHOO WHOO. Later in the summer the

Townsend gray fox presented himself rather dramatically to several in the camp area when he darted into view long enough to seize a squealing ground squirrel that evidently failed to divide his attention sufficiently between the fir scales he was nibbling and constant guard duty against predators.

During August the backyard became the property of the energetic cone harvester, the Sierra chickaree, often called the red or Douglas squirrel, a vociferous fellow who scolded trespassers with "quero-quero-quero" and cackled angrily whenever he saw ground squirrels or jays intruding to steal some of his crop of cut-down green cones. The bulbous white fir cones dropped from a hundred feet high would serve warning as they plummeted down, hitting power limbs, bouncing and splitting, clattering at times on the granite boulders below. In one period of thirty minutes around six in the morning, when this work began, until it ceased with the busy fellow's descent to gather the harvest, I counted thirty eight separate "bombings." Several mornings before breakfast I watched the chickaree leap from rock to boulder and up the talus slope to hiding places with half or even a whole fir cone jutting from

his mouth. That other rodents of the forest floor benefited was evident, since broken cones and chips were scattered everywhere as a result of this little tree squirrel's forays. These were regular breakfast time labors for him, and they continued sporadically through a good part of the day. Three weeks this has continued, until at this writing, late in August, it seems the cone harvest of both ponderosa and fir must surely be all in. Yet this morning I feared for my tent when the little bombardier successfully zeroed in on the canvas ceiling just above my bed.

I haven't mentioned the visit of the rattlesnake to the camp woodpile, or the scare one gave to a neighbor naturalist who stepped on its tail as he climbed the slope to find the spotted owl - the tremendous beetles and flies, the prionus and the crane fly, that rested on my front screen after entering my open back door.

It is undoubtedly obvious by now that this observer was able to maintain the "open tent flap" policy only as a bachelor for the summer, for what housewife would tolerate these guests? Though still somewhat short of the real under-the-stars living, one should try it now and then to become closer acquainted with Dame Nature on the other side of the day.

MIRROR LAKE

Ted R. McVey, Ranger-Naturalist

Mirror Lake was unbelievably beautiful in the moonlight.
The reflection of Half Dome seemed to fill the very water.
Each crack and crevice seemed at my finger tips.
How can so much beauty be found in one place?

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